

The mingling of the media

KINETIC ART is not the same as cinematic art (the k is somehow more posh than the c) and a mobile may seem a cut above a movie; but they are employing the same ingredients, equal parts of time and space, to arrive at a similar product—the changing image. ‘Going to the pictures’ may lead you to a gallery and Renoir *père* or a cinema and Renoir *filis*.

The give and take between the two media makes an intriguing study (it could form a fine ICA-type exhibition). The vitality and impact of the cinema—the essential art of the first half of the twentieth century, as TV may be of the second half—has fascinated innumerable painters and sculptors, as anybody with a knowledge of contemporary art can plainly see. Sometimes they pick on the image (Warhol’s Marilyn Monroes, Paolozzi’s Micky Mice), sometimes on the sequential technique (Rauschenberg’s Dante drawings), sometimes on the jumpy, blurry, flickering or superimposed effects due to film technology.

Meanwhile the cinema is visibly edging nearer to painting. It is slowly abandoning its intimacy with the novel and the theatre, to take on a new character closely resembling the mysterious, loosely assembled features of the plastic arts.

Many art schools recognise the new situation by including a film department in their make-up—a step which is bound to increase the overlapping between film and art and to accelerate the movement away from logical literary narrative. (This fast approach is still likely to persist as a valid idiom, particularly in the popular commercial cinema, just as it does in popular commercial art.) The change can already be felt both in the freedom of a solid West End success like ‘Blow-Up’ or the fantastic ending to Lindsay Ander-



Our art critic, Nigel Gosling, reports on the marriage of painting and the cinema.

son’s ‘If’ (not to mention the old Nouvelle Vague), and in the new way of labelling films. Instead of falling into the old categories—Western, costume-drama, spectacular, thriller or what-have-you—they are now known by the personal style of their director (‘The new Hitchcock’ or ‘The new Godard’—we can hardly recall the title) in the same way that a painting is, say, a Picasso first and a still-life or a nude only afterwards. These ‘films d’auteur’ have already acquired almost the exact status of a piece of bronze or a square of canvas-and-pigment. They are full-blown works of art.

Now the inevitable consequences are beginning to arrive. Two manifest themselves this week. The first is the phenomenon of the artist who works impartially in both media, either as painter or as filmmaker (as these non-commercial directors like to be called). An example can be found at the Redmark Gallery in St Christopher’s Place, where Stephen Dwoskin, a young American living in London, is both exhibiting his paintings and showing, from time to time, his films. The films won an award at the International Experimental Film Festival in Belgium last year. The paintings are rather like them—sluggishly sensual and a bit portentous—but the drawings are fluent and often sensitive.

The other development is even more interesting. This is the acceptance of the film into the final shrine of the genuine work of art

—the collector’s sanctum. When the highly respected Gimpel Gallery of London and Zurich opens a branch in New York next month, it will be selling not only paintings and sculpture and prints, but also films.

This startling new operation will be in the hands of the youngest Gimpel (named René after his grandfather, friend of the Impressionists and founder of the firm). He has apparently explored the strange new market in Europe as well as America, and is confident of success. A Paris gallery, Givaudon, will already sell you, from its premises on the Boulevard St Germain, a short reel of Godard or Martial Raysse to take home; in Germany three or four determined collectors are on the hunt for festival prizewinners; and even in London you can buy at many shops a tiny clip of an old Laurel and Hardy for your 8-mm. projector.

René Gimpel plans a more massive and serious operation, but he intends to start modestly. To begin with, he will handle only two film-makers, both American—Gregory Markopoulos and Robert Beavers. The films (15 by Markopoulos and four by the very young Beavers) will be in limited editions of different sizes, as though they were bronzes or prints. The prices will depend on the length of the film—some are full-feature length—and on the size of the edition, ranging from about £600 up to £5,000 (if this seems a lot, just re-

flect on the cost of printing a colour-film and adding sound). The copyright conditions will be similar to those guarding a sound-recording, i.e., they are for private use only. The original negative, with normal distribution rights, will remain the property of the maker.

These will in fact be rare, select and fragile objects to be hoarded in private—an intriguing example of a current fashion, in reverse, for they will be objects normally sold as multiples transformed into rarities. And demand for them certainly seems likely to increase. The imminent arrival of the home-movie into our sitting-rooms promises to make a film library as essential a part of gracious living kit as a wallful of paintings or a shelf-ful of records. A German firm, Braun of Nuremberg, is already advertising eight-millimetre film-cassette sets with TV-type screens; the closed-circuit units now in use here for training and education will surely soon be nosing into the entertainment world: in America CBS have invented a machine for inserting a video-tape cartridge into your TV set (one snag is that several different recording systems are still being used).

In fact, the moment is fast approaching where every decent modern home will be fitted automatically with a complete wall unit which, at the touch of a button, will dispense either David Frost, a Bach recording, Radio Roundabout or ‘The Illeac Passion’ (the fascinating Markopoulos film which was shown recently at the National Film Theatre) or Auntie May videophoning from Ipswich. A few years more and we may get, as well, a teleprinted edition of THE OBSERVER, a Scotch and soda—or a Final Demand from the Electronics Repair Co. Meanwhile, if you want to make a corner in your favourite film star or director, there’s no time to be lost. The next thing you know, they will be breaking the records at Sotheby’s.